

My testimony is as follows:

I arrived in D.C. having already made a good friend on the plane ride: the other Arizona delegate. For some reason, we seemed to have much in common, and our personalities clicked. I was delighted to have found such a companion, but I was in for a real treat when I met the other 102 delegates. They were, indeed, the "cream of the crop," and I found myself having deep conversations about everything from my favorite kind of chocolate (maybe not so deep, in this case!) to my cultural identity - all within a few minutes of knowing these people. They overwhelmed me with their intellectual curiosity, their insights, and their friendliness. Cliches seem to do this memory injustice, but I will never forget those 103 delegates.

New friends aside, the program was one impressive activity after another. Every speaker had a unique message to convey to us, be it one of tenacity, sociability, motivation, or anything else that had shaped their careers. The caliber of the people we met - President Bush, no less - was surreal, and to be called "America's future" by these incredible public figures was a heartwarming experience. Furthermore, walking through the Capitol, the White House, the Supreme Court, the Senate Russell Office Building - and many more monumental buildings - was, for lack of a better word, amazing for me as an American citizen. Yet the most unexpected part of the trip was our interaction with the military mentors. Having had minimal exposure to the men and women who serve our country, I was awestruck by their dignity, their patriotism, and their discipline. Most of all, though, I was surprised by their affability and their warmth. They are what made my trip to D.C. a trip of a lifetime.